To the Members of
The Society of Inquiry,
Theo. Sem.: Princeton, N.J.

Lodiana, March 7th, 1851.

Dear Brethren,

I had the pleasure of receiving a very interesting communication from your Corr. Secretary on Foreign Missions, more than a year since: and it has not been a want of interest in yourselves as a Society, or in the beloved and venerable Institution to which you belong, nor yet an undervaluing of the correspondence with your Committee on For. Missions, that has delayed my reply: but an incessant pressure of important and urgent duties: such a pressure as some of you will perhaps one day know something of, when you shall have fairly entered upon your course of labour as Foreign Missionaries. When I last wrote you, which was on the 8th June, 1848, I did it under a strong conviction of the necessity of doing promptly, as well as with the might, what the hand found to do. But promptness presupposes arrangement, and a time for every thing. And I now postpone, the Lord willing, to write you annually, once a year. I trust you will continue to note matters of inquiry that may occur to any of you from time to time, and suggest them, as you have hitherto done, when writing to me. The letter last received from you, under date of Oct. 1. 1849, was from the pen of Mr. Stuart Mitchell, and as I have already remarked, was a truly interesting one: and gave me much satisfying information: both with respect to Princeton in particular, and with respect to subjects of general importance in the country: concluding with two or three questions, which I shall have much pleasure in noticing: after telling you in brief how it is with us here, and what our prospects are.

I have then only to say that we are still sowing the seed in a wide & deeply interesting field: while as to the harvest, we have scarcely begun to realize the first fruits: if as first fruits be reckoned only souls palpably converted. And as for the future, the prospect is of a wider,

and still widening field, which must yield its revenue to the Lord of the harvest, but which must first, dear brethren, have labourers provided for it. We have extended our operations, as you are aware, to Lahore: and there, and at Jalandar, which is likewise beyond the Satlaj, there is free access to thousands upon thousands of souls, which between, and around those cities, are many large and important places, each of which would at once furnish work to occupy, and exhaust the energies of one, two, or more, missionaries; were only the men to be had. Then off to the West is the province of Multan, now a part of the British dominions; throughout the length and breadth of which the sound of the Gospel, (in the native language at least,) has never been heard: and again to the North the beautiful, & far famed valley of Kashmir, with its delightful climate, and fertile soil, but where the moral and spiritual darkness that everywhere attend the crescent reigns unbroken: and the first influence of the beams that radiate from the cross is yet to be realized. Kashmir in one sense indeed is not yet open: but the natives of the country have the most friendly feeling toward Europeans, and would by far prefer their rule to that of their Maha Rája, who is not, as his title imports, of themselves, but of the Sikhs: and the rule of the Sikh princes seems ever to have been most irksome to the Muhammadans. And as for the Maha Rája himself, he is most friendly to the British, because he holds Kashmir, in a manner, by their will. So that every way, Europeans have most free access to the country, and the time is perhaps near when it will be suitable to commence direct missionary operations there. Even now, there are thousands and tens of thousands of Kashmiris, to be met with in the cities of the Panjáb; and there is no missionary among us all, who knows their language. Many of them indeed speak Urdú, so that we can communicate easily with them: for instance, in this city, they form a large proportion of our hearers: but any one, who understands human nature, may fancy what pre-eminent advantages that Missionary would enjoy, who should speak to them in their own tongue, in which they were born.

As to the particular details of what we are doing, the missionaries located at each station, the books printed and distributed, the number of pupils in our schools, &c. &c. you have these from our Annual Reports: & that of the last year will perhaps be with you about this time. It will furnish you with nothing particularly new or striking, but it will tell you what we are trying to do, and how much we need, your prayers: as well as some of you, to join us in our work.

I now proceed to notice the questions in Br. Mitchell's letter. 1. "To what extent is English taught in the schools?" — We have, available, the means and appliances for imparting knowledge, in the English language, through all the branches ordinarily pursued in our Academies at home: and there are generally on hand a few who make very respectable attainments, even in the higher of these branches: but the most learn, when they have acquired such a knowledge of English as will enable them to talk a little, and read an easy book; in connexion with which, they will perhaps have learned the rudiments of Eng. Grammar, a little Geography, & the simpler rules of Arithmetic, in addition to writing a plain, decent hand. These attainments will procure a bad employ, in some Government (or other,) office, by means of which he can support himself. In the school here however a good many boys have made respectable attainments in Algebra, Geometry, Natural Philosophy, Evidences of Christianity, & other branches that the higher classes in our Academies at home pursue.

2. "Could a person be useful as a teacher without a knowledge of the native language?" What I have already said will prepare you for my reply to this: viz. that such an one could doubtless be very useful in teaching the higher classes. Accordingly our good sister, Mrs. Porter, who only about a year since came to the country, has nearly ever since her arrival been giving valuable assistance to the Missionary superintending the English school, by hearing one or two recitations of the higher classes. But even in teaching these higher branches, there are times when one finds it very convenient to resort to the native language, to explain some difficult idea. And any one assisting in a school finds it a good school for himself: for he will gradually and imperceptibly acquire the language, while

he is teaching others. Such at least I believe will usually be found to be the case.

3. "Is it advisable for men to enter this field, who do not acquire languages with facility?" In reply, I would observe, that there may doubtless be such an inaptitude for the acquisition of language as would make an entrance upon the foreign field inexpedient. But it would be very difficult, I apprehend, to determine certainly beforehand that such an one, or such another, was a clear case of this inaptitude. Certainly I would not insist on anything more than moderate abilities: for these, combined with persevering, self-denying industry, would in the course of two or three years enable a man to tell the Hindús & the Mussulmán, quite intelligibly of the way of salvation; which one possessed of something more than ordinary abilities will do it within a year: and yet will not perhaps be in the end a more useful missionary than the other: which during this interval of preparation, there is not only teaching, but much besides, in which a man may make himself useful. I have known some most excellent, useful missionaries, who did not possess any remarkable quickness in this thing.

Therefore the 4th question, viz. "Should the possession of very moderate abilities prevent a student desiring the Office of a Missionary from seeking it, any more than from seeking the Office of a settled pastor at home?" is virtually answered already: only that word "very" is rather indefinite. Where few hardly admits of a definite answer. Perhaps what I have said above will be sufficient. Counsel sought at the throne of grace, as well as of prudent, impartial, friends, must determine the rest.

5. and Lastly, "Do you think it advisable for men to spend a short time, say from 1 to 5 years, in the duties of the ministry in this country, before going abroad?" No dear brethren, not 5 years: nor 4, nor 3, ordinarily: nor 2 might be well: in case a man had kept himself isolated very much during his course of study, which he need not, & ought not to do: but when a man has got his armour on, let him enter the field: and if he wants experience, he will get it there. This is my humble opinion, and I have thought on the matter a good deal.

Now with fervent prayers that you may all be richly imbued with the Spirit of the Blessed Saviour, and that such of you as he is calling to the foreign field may be enabled plainly to hear his voice, & be duly prepared for the great work, asking also to be remembered in your prayers, I remain, dear brethren, sincerely & affectionately yours.

C. Lavies